The Black Cat

February 1909

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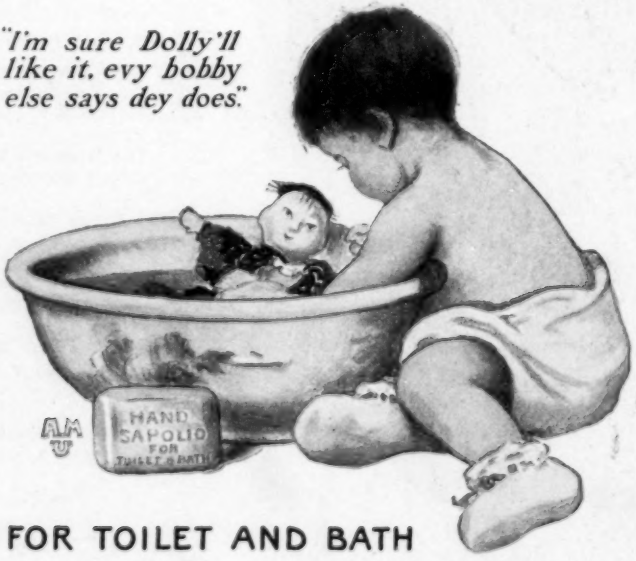
HAND SAPOLIO

If Suki-San is to have an "honorable bath"

"I'm sure Dolly'll like it, evy bobby else says dey does."



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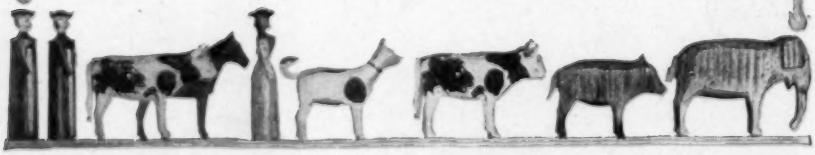

The Black Cat

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In the Interest of Science.*

BY EMMET F. HARTE.

SMOKY hailed originally from the Big Horn basin and — aside from his worldly habits of tobacco, profanity, bad whiskey and aversion to work — was of breezy manner and playful disposition. A subtle air of romance clung to him — the picturesque, airy glamour of the great West, the West of the Unfenced Range. It was rumored that Smoky had in bygone days attained a not enviable repute along the line of altering cattle brands — even that Wyoming had become too warm a climate for him. But, be that as it may, Smoky held his hearers, when he willed, in the net of his fancy; he was a conversational artist.

"Speaking about this dry wave which is sweeping over the South and East where they say you have to get a pill-peddler's prescription in writing before you can even take a bath," remarked Smoky, on occasion, "reminds me that Southeastern Utah would be a hot location for these parched-throated, temperance rooters to colonize in; they could take their drinking water along in tablet form and when they wanted a wash they could get down and flutter in the alkali dust, like a hen does. I once took a saunter across the Nioche desert which to think of

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to-day gives me a thirst; I thank you, I don't care if I do. As I was saying, it was some years ago, along about the time the free range went into the low-down hands of the sheep-herders. The cow-man was feeling pretty pizenous and four of us boys made a so-called raid into the Green River country, one night, expecting to smear out a certain camp of unclean desecrators of the white man's grass. We struck snags; we stirred up a nest of skunks which could pick off vest-buttons with Winchesters by moonlight at a hundred and fifty yards and had not a compunction — not one. Squirrel-shooters was what that outfit consisted of, man, fancy gun artists. Our party left two with their troubles over and one plugged through and through the upper lungs who got away by the assistance of yours respectfully that also received a .30:40 through the shoulder, a graze on the side and two through the hat. That sheep-herder outfit was entirely too sarcastic with their shooting. Then they sent compliments and delicacies of the season and mentioned that they would feel more or less worried during the few days that elapsed before they made a walking sieve out of a certain person called Smoky, placing bets on the same. I, feeling disgusted with such notoriety, rode three days and nights and took a change of scenics.

"Went into the prospecting business on a small scale after that, and worked across the divide that fall, getting as far south as Colorado. The following summer I took a contract to explore the Nioche desert, the same being a second King Solomon's mines for treasure, according to my figures.

"I wandered around in company with a person called Skeeter Malone, Irish with blue hair, and good company until we run short of tobacco, whereupon he hits for Carson or Tucson, I forget which, and promises to drift back inside of three weeks with more grub and a pack-mule. He took along all the money. I afterwards heard of him in Sydney, Australia. If I should ever run across that same Skeeter I'll shore take the time to change the map on his face considerable as a token of remembrance. I puttered around in that vicinity until my water-hole went dry and then I moved over about ten miles eastward to another place. That was getting low also and I thought I'd bet-

ter skip across the desert while I had a chance and not waste any more time. It was about three days' journey, I figured.

"It was the same old fool-story, there's been others; some of them got through and some of their bones are out there yet, lying around between the Rockies and the Sierras. Take my word that little three letters d-r-y means something on the alkali plain with the sun overhead making a mummy out of you. I went dry. It wasn't long or I wouldn't be here to-day, saying here's to your good health! (That's a mighty fine article!) But, as I was saying, I remember the thirst and beginning to get locoed.

"Then I staggered around a sandy rise, down into an arroyo and on to a little dried-up wart of a man, wearing spectacles and one of these here helmet-hats and accompanied by a solemn-looking and uncomplaining burro as natural as a photo.

"I tried to say something casual and sociable and also borrow a drink, but all I could do was make a noise like a dust-storm 'rattling o'er the stony street,' during a protracted drought; the little man wasn't all day taking in the exact situation, though, and the way he put me under treatment and softened up my caked places was good to look at even for a burro, who was the only spectator. They only had about a gallon of water themselves, and no more in sight except in a mirage lake off to the south, which was good Christian Science but awful poor for wetting, but my new friend just splattered it around promiscuous, like he owned a perpetual water right. As soon as I got the roof of my mouth and my tongue soaked loose from each other I mentioned it. The little man twiddled his spectacles contentedly and chuckled and the burro wiggled his long ears. They didn't seem to be worrying overly, so I didn't see any use of me borrowing any trouble myself, to prove which, I finished up the last drop they had an' joined in the general satisfaction prevailing, even if the thermometer was about a hundred and thirty-five or forty in the shade, with the understanding of course that there was shade, which there wasn't.

"The water made me feel better. I had renewed my lease and felt revived enough to crack a joke when I happened to let my gaze wander to a near-by cactus and as plain as day saw a

yellow and white tom-cat sitting there with a blue ribbon around his neck and right by him, curled up snug, was one of these stubby-nosed, curly-tailed pug dogs, asleep. I didn't make no fuss at first — I waited to see if it would wear off. It didn't. Then I asked the gent in spectacles if he noticed anything peculiar about me? He said nothing struck him funny enough to laugh at. All the time I was watching that tom-cat and finally he blinked his eyes and yawned.

"'Mr. Man,' I said, reaching for my six-shooter, 'don't pay any attention to me, but I'm going to take a pop at that there cactus to ease my mind. I'm seeing things.'

"'Holy Cæsar!' he yelled, 'don't shoot! There's my cat and dog under that cactus.' I fell on his neck.

"'You've saved me!' I said. 'I thought I had gone wrong in the attic, sure enough, when I saw them two animiles there in a place like this.'

"'I'll introduce myself,' he said, 'I'm Professor Charles Van Strenger of Boston.'

"'Happy, I'm sure,' I said, 'I'm William H. Riggs of the Big Horn Basin, sometimes called Smoky for convenience. I take it, you're one of them Science fellows, from your magnifying glass. Bugs or bones?'

"'Well, just now I am looking for a certain kind of a cactus,' he said, not seeming to see any joke. It was a joke even to a dying man to see that little, solemn-looking cuss with his burro, pug-dog and tom-cat pattering around out there under that sizzling sun on the alkali sand. I laughed loud and long. It finally nettled the Prof somewhat, and he asked:

"'Are you sure you're not having some kind of a spell now?'

"'Don't mind me,' I said, 'I'm laughing at a funny story I heard last summer; the point just come to me. Are you staying around in this condemned country very long?'

"'Well,' he said, 'I don't expect to make this my home. Do you live hereabouts?' I exploded again.

"'I've been prospecting a little,' I said.

"'Know much about minerals?' he inquired.

"'I should snicker and snort!' I returned, scenting a tenderfoot, 'I'm an original mineral expert. What I don't know

about the yellow and white and red metals in their native haunts, wouldn't pay you to fool away time over.'

"'You surprise me!' he said, producing a fat black cigar by which he saved my life the second time.

"'Aside from a few little whims in the animal line,' I remarked, 'you and me could get along fine, Prof, for days and days — in token of which loan me a match.'

"'Don't you like harmless animals?' he asked, surprised.

"'Well,' I said, affable, 'I don't mind confiding that a pug dog makes me feel hateful; they look like they might have been going somewhere in a thundering hurry sometime and run into something; a pug dog looks insulting and sneery to me. As for that there cat, I should think if you'd skin him, he'd be more comfortable in this climate. The burro I indorse.' And I changed the subject.

"'How far are we from any accumulation of moisture, if you won't be offended?' I asked.

"'About four hours,' he said. Which same answer relieved me, so I took the Prof in as a chum and a side pard, menagerie and all, even helping to corral and load the pets on to the burro before we started.

On the way across the hot, sandy plain, I even loosened up a few and related the Prof some lurid ones to beguile him.

"'And you say there have really been diamonds found in Arizona?' he inquired.

"'I do say so,' I declared, 'I've found at least a peck, myself; one I remember I sold to an insurance agent in Tombstone for $30,000.'

"'Phew!' said the Prof.

"'Sure!' I continued. 'And there's a tribe of Injuns called the Pinheads, or something, that live in caves along the cliffs, and they have gold and silver mines, nobody knows how rich, and precious stones of all kinds — rubies, garnets, topazes, amethysts, opal and others I disremember — to throw at the birds. Arizona is lousy with 'em.' I said.

"'I've heard there's many old ruins in that section,' he said. 'prehistoric ruins of cities and such.'

"'Now you've touched on my hobby.' I said, gleeful, 'Six

Eastern scientific guys and me once dug out a buried city in New Mexico, and say, we made a clean-up! Fine statutes and oil paintings in gold frames and brass furniture and everything you could think of. You wouldn't believe me if I'd tell you we found a solid gold buffalo, life size; we did.' I wanted to see how much he would stand without squealing.

"'You surprise me!' was all he said, without batting his eye.

"Then I hitched my six-shooter around more comfortable, took a new hold and told him about Lost River and the locoed chief of the Hualpies and the petrified forest and that mastodons and other strange creatures roamed in droves along the head waters of the Snake. I spread myself on the wonders of Cañon Diablo, where, I said, awful-looking, weird things come out of holes and dance around lakes of boiling brimstone at night. I told him about the mammoth red bats of Roaring Cave in the Grand Cañon and the big Serpent of the Gila River. The more I came through with, the tickleder he was — and interested? I should say so.

"Then I handed him the one about the rooster I saw in Butte that had his head shot off just about the wings and they put a silver tube in the top of his wind-pipe with a valve in it so he could breathe; I thought that would throw him, but it didn't.

"'Wonderful!' he said. 'Most remarkable!'

"Then I unraveled a fragment or two about Moqui Medicine-men and how they could conjure up thunder-storms in a tent and grow a stalk of corn with ears on it in two hours, or turn a cur-pup into a bull-snake right before your eyes. I couldn't do nothing with him; wore myself out trying to make him beg off, but he swallowed it all.

"'Your experience has been wide and varied' he said, 'and your observation very keen and comprehensive. I might say the things you have related are, in fact, uncommon.'

"I should say they were; they were pretty near imaginary.

"Well, we had covered about ten miles or so, in the meantime, and the desert looked as flat, barren and dry as ever, as far as I could see. It was an unbroken stretch of alkali and the heat was flaring up something fierce, even if the sun was getting a little lower in the west and not beating straight down.

"'Say, Prof,' I said, finally, 'what about that water? I can see ten miles all around and more than that straight up and it still looks discouraging; you wouldn't lie to an orphan?'

The Prof looked reproachful and the yellow cat blinked at me out of his basket like I'd forgot my manners.

"'You can take a bath, if you want to, in ten minutes,' said the Prof shortly. I never come any closer disagreeing with my own father than I did then with him, but I kept still for a wonder, concluding to wait the ten minutes at least.

"Then we came to the jumping off place. Nature cracks some funny jokes around over the country, but she never framed up a completer surprise than that there Prof. Van Strengers' jumping-off place; you walk along on the alkali, with the dust and the hot heat fogging up into your blistered face and the sun slathering away at you from over and behind, and all of a sudden you start to step, and catch yourself just in time to keep from walking out into air; right there before you is a gash in the ground about fifty yards wide and no fence to keep you from falling over; you sneak up a step and peek over and grab yourself by the suspenders; that gash is cut to the bone. About a mile or so down you can see a little silver lake and some green grass and a cottonwood tree, all correct. It's as nice as a mirage and about as accessible.

"'Amigo,' I said, thoughtful, after taking a look while the Prof waited, 'you don't happen to have a balloon, that's in good working order, about you, do you?' The Prof got in a good humor immediate.

"'Come along,' he said with broad smiles, 'I know a way down.' And he did, a little narrow, dizzy trail wound around the side and after some acrobatics and risk to life, liberty and the course of true love, we landed in the nice soft grass and uncrated the enthusiastic and despisable pug-dog and the self-satisfied tom while the burro loosened the drawstring in his ears and mowed a few swaths.

"The little lake in the centre was as smooth as ironed silk — not a bit of wind, I don't suppose, had ever roughed it since it first happened. The bottom of the Cañon was wider than the top; and the whole gash was about a mile long, with hardly a

way to get up or down, only the trail we come by. The sides didn't look so high from the bottom. I think the Prof said it was about 200 feet from the desert straight down to the water. I shook hands six times.

"'Prof,' I said, 'I'll take back everything I ever thought about you, and I hereby proclaim that if you want to keep a guinea-pig, a white rat, or a bush-spider for a pet, you've got a right to, and I'm for you most prodigious. You are an extinguished gentleman, a true sport and a judge of economics.'

"'I'm much obliged for your good opinion,' said the Prof, 'come into the house.' I hadn't seen any house, but he had one all right, and that wasn't all he had.

"Around a jut in the rocky wall was a three-story, stone, cliff-dweller mansion as neat and fine as Fifth Avenue, New York, which I haven't seen but have heard of, and if that there science scamp didn't have everything modern, up to standard and bar none, I'll kiss the first Chink I see. He had rooms — about a hundred and fifty of 'em — fitted up for high-living: Cook-room, bedroom, sitting-room, dining-room, parlor, library, cloak-room, ante-room, cellar, roof-garden, vestibule, chapel.

"He had a junk-shop he called a laboratory with all kinds of little contraptions connected therewith. He had books and magazines to read and everything to do heavy housekeeping with, except a female cook. Down alongside the little lake, he had a garden with a toy irrigation ditch, and lettuce, radishes and spuds growing fit to tickle you to death. The whole lay-out appeared to me to be just about as snug and comfortable as Robinson Crusoe ever dared to dream about and I started skirmishing for a job in a roundabout way.

"'Prof,' I said, 'as near as I can observe by your samples, you've got convenient quarters when once in, but you seem to be some shy a cook. I'll mention, casual, while on the subject, that that's my strong point — I am there with the skillet.'

"'You surprise me,' he returned, 'and since you mentioned it, I'll allow you to get supper.'

"Well, I spread myself on that supper. No spuds was ever lucky enough to be fried as them, no coffee ever as delicious, no

flap-jacks half as temptatious. The bacon by itself was enough to entice a man five hundred miles away from his happy home, if he knew about it; and we cut a can of apples of some ancient vintage and made turnovers in the grease. The Prof tucked away six and fell back gibbering with delight. I was elected cook without a dissenting vote. If there was any salary attached to my new job, I'll swear I never heard what it was. We forgot to mention it at the time and afterwards things got so interesting and entertaining that I never thought to remind the Prof that I was hired help. The job wasn't hard. I just prognosticated around and smoked the Prof's black cigars and concocted viands whenever we got hungry. I made myself solid with the menagerie and the blooming pug-dog got so he'd follow me around like I was his school chum. The tom-cat was too lazy to follow anything, and a burro prefers his own company to anybody else's — but the pup was a born accompanist. The Prof was busy. I've met a lot of these here science galoots trailing around over this Western country, and they're mostly pecking at rocks, piking for fossiles or accumulating fool things like caterpillars or other specimens as they call them, and think they're smarter than range people anywhere. Perhaps they are — I've never heard what the United States court says on the subject. But the Prof wasn't collecting specimens; he never pecked a rock or caught a butterfly, of which there were some six or eight at large in the valley; he puttered around in his laboratory once in awhile and had bottles of gummy-looking stuff he'd ponder over, besides crocks full of smelly roots and things asoak. One day he says to me:

"'Smoky,' he allowed, 'I wish you'd take the donkey and go down to the south about nine miles, where you'll find an arroyo with some cactoribus scandalous combustibus — or something that sounded like that — growing. Gather me about a bushel and come back by return mail, will you?' I did. And scratched up my hide some doing it. When we got back the Prof had rigged up a regular distillery, up in one of the rooms, and for awhile I surmised he was going into the moonshine business. I didn't discourage him — it was a thirsty country.

"Well, he made sour-mash out of the cactus and then he had me make a four-days' trip to the settlement to get an express package for him. The town was a Mormon village called Prophet's Choice — I've heard it's been discontinued since — and they had a twice a week stage-line to the railroad. There wasn't a drop of anything better to drink than water in the town without positively exhibiting at least two rattlesnake bites, so I didn't sojourn long after I got my errand done. I took back also a few lines of bacon, salt, sugar and other luxuries, and wafted in, sober and melancholy, a whole half-day ahead of schedule. The Prof said he'd missed my cooking, and the pup and the tom were right glad to see me. The Prof opened his package, which consisted of a lot of little bundles and bottles like he was going to start a drug-store. He squinted at them and hum-hawed to himself most sociable. Finally he said:

"'Two drops of this would destroy all the nine lives of our friend here,' holding up a small bottle and indicating Thomas curled up on the floor, 'and I mix it in a glassful of sugared water and a teaspoonful of these other two with it and it makes a harmless drink, pleasant and beneficial.'

"'I'll take your word for it,' I said, 'though I wouldn't pass up about four fingers of good fire water just now if I had it.'

"'Why didn't you mention it?' he said, surprised. 'I've got a little somewhere around, I think. I'll look for it,' and back he comes with a flat bottle he'd had cached somewhere with not even the label broken. He had saved my life the third time. In return for them two drinks — he allowed me two — I architectured a supper for the bunch that put them all down cooing. Prof said it was a culinary, that's the word he used, a culinary masterpiece.

"'Prof,' I said, 'without meaning any offense, and if it's a fair question, what kind of dope is this you're concocting up there in your lavatory, or whatever you call it? You're not making anything good to drink and overlooking your old friend Smoky?'

"The little cuss hobnobbed with himself for quite a while before answering; he didn't seem crazy to tell everything, but finally he loosened.

"'Smoky,' he said, after awhile, 'I'm engaged in a secret work — a work of vast importance and far-reaching possibilities — and if I was not certain of success I wouldn't even give you a hint; as it is, I'll confide that I have discovered the Elixir of Life.'

"'I never dreamed of such a business,' I said, 'or I'd 'a' been tiptoeing around with my heart in my throat. What the devil is the Elixir of Life, if it's a fair question?'

"'I'll explain,' he said, patient as a schoolmarm with an unusually bullet-headed kid, 'all down through history, certain men have searched and worked to discover a serum that will arrest the decay of tissues' — that was what he said, exactly. — 'and they have all failed. This wonderful Elixir, this infusion into the veins of new energy and the restoring of youth, again and again, the prolonging of the life of man into an indefinite period, has been sought after a heap,' he said, 'and it remained for me, Professor Van Strenger, in the beginning of the twentieth century, to find the key to the problem.' I was so interested I forgot to puff and my cigar went out. I hadn't ever sized up the Prof for being such an entertainer.

"'I must ask you to keep the secret awhile longer,' he went on, 'until I have completed a sufficient supply for extensive experiments.'

"'Sure,' I said, 'Prof, you needn't be afraid of me spreading it; I don't see very many people lately and I'm known as the most ferocious kind of a liar anyway, so it wouldn't be believed.'

"'Thank you,' said he, and continued; 'I have gone further than the others; my discovery not only prolongs life, but restores it. I can raise the dead.'

"Now I had related the Prof some pretty fanciful ones from time to time as they occurred to me, but I hadn't expected him to try to get back like that. I guffawed. What does he do then? He snapped his talkograph shut like a collapsible tin cup and closed up like a clam. Not another word. Nitto. He had no sense of humor. I saw that the little cuss actually believed what he'd been telling and I tried to square myself. No, he had his feelings hurt and was sorer than barber's itch. We went to

bed that night non-committal and uncommunicative and in the morning it took two soft-boiled eggs and an armload of tortillas to make the Prof smile; I forgot to say we had, among other things in the animal line, four hens and a terrible pompous old rooster in our gully, and our eggs were as fresh as if just from college.

"Well, when the Prof had lapped up about a dollar and eighty cents' worth of home cooking, he burst into bloom and commenced to tell more about the dope business again.

"'Smoky,' he said, 'of course you couldn't be expected to believe everything about the Elixir without some visible manifestations of its properties. I have decided to give you a proof. Which of the animals, now, would you say that I thought the most of, if asked?'

"'Well,' I said, 'the burro is the usefulest, the pup is the friendliest, and the kitty is the least account for any possible thing — I should say, I guess, that you are most sentimental of all about the kitty.'

"'Good!' said he, 'we'll drown Thomas.'

"'Drown him?' I said, incredulous.

"'Drown him,' he said, getting up, 'till he is deader than an Egyptian mummy. Then I'll bring him back to life with the Elixir.'

"'I'd much rather get rid of the pug,' I said, finally, 'he's such an insolent, insulting, over-fed, smart Alex and —'

"'All right,' said Prof, 'drown 'em both if you like.'

"'How about the burro?' I asked, 'and the poultry?'

"'Never mind them,' he said, 'for the present, the two will do.' The Prof never saw a joke during our acquaintance.

"Well, I caught the pets and attached a twenty-pound rock to each one, under the Prof's directions; then I tied a rope to 'em and anchored 'em to the shore and there was two splashes about a minute apart in our lake and the pug and the tom were across into the happy hunting grounds. I hated to do it — it is against my grain to kill a creature like that for nothing — I even wanted to yank 'em out again; almost begged the Prof to let me, but he said 'No.'

"'Leave them in until night,' he said, 'then you will admit they are reasonably dead.'

"'I'll believe they are fairly well extinct in half an hour.' I said, 'neither one being frogs or turtles.'

"'Good!' he said. 'I want you to be satisfied.'

"Well, we left them defunct animiles in ten feet of water all that day. Till six P. M. by the Prof's John Deere watch they soaked, and then, one by one, I pulled 'em out and viewed the remainders. They was shore dead — I'll vouch for it. Drowned plumb, exact and complete, and we toted them, all wet and drippy, into the lavatory where the Prof expected to do his stunts. I laid 'em out on a flat rock where they could drain and the Prof got out his little bottles and his tools.

"'Which first?' he asked, rolling up his sleeves.

"'You're the doctor,' I said, 'one's as dear to me as the other.'

"'Hand me Thomas, then,' he said. I drained the yellow cat a minute and then held him up while the Prof took his bicycle pump and shot about four fingers of plate blue dope just back of his right ear. Now, wonders never cease in this Western country, and sometimes a man doubts his own eyesight, but this here is straighter than the first five cards out of a new deck: That there tom-cat begun to twitch, then he squirmed and sputtered a little and kicked with his foot; then, I hope to never raise another glass if he didn't cough, get up and go rub against the Prof's leg as live as any cat that ever meowed and me with my hair riz up fiercer than the bristles of an Arkansas hog in search of a lost acorn.

"'Now for Marcus Antonius,' he said, enthusiastic. I looked at that there pug pup, all water-soaked and bedraggled, with his lip curled up and peeled off of his teeth in his customary sneery way, but deader than a mackerel, and I first thought it was a waste of dope to bring him back. He wasn't any earthly good, but — I gathered him up and brought him over. There was some water sloshing around inside him which seeped out finally, and in five minutes he was wagging his tail. Well, the Prof had certainly delivered the goods. He had produced the results strictly. He also had me roped and flung spraddling; my voice sounded little and far away when I perked up enough to say something out loud.

"'Prof,' I said, 'you win. Deuce high is my best. I'm considered something of a judge of cattle, a fair shot, can cook, throw a rope, ride, and hold a mean hand in poker sometimes, but I don't perform no miracles. At magic, I pass. Your work is too deep for me.'

"'Tut, tut!' he answered, 'it's nothing. I could do the same with you, yourself.'

"'Here, now, Prof,' I said, scared into a coat of mush-ice all over. 'Prof, you don't aim to try no freak work on poor old, harmless Smoky, do you?'

"'My dear man,' he said, 'calm yourself. I wouldn't hurt one hair of that bald spot on your head. I will make a giddy and blithesome youth out of you.'

"'Not me!' I said, 'No, you don't; not for one minute.'

"He looked disappointed. That night I took turn about sleeping with each eye; the other I kept on the Prof, who slept like an innocent baby and woke up just as fresh as I was groggy. All morning he was busy in his junk-shop making dope and tinkering around among his bottles and crocks; then he come out. loaded up the burro with some grub and water and said he would likely be gone for two days, after some more ungodly plants or something he needed to make a certain kind of a poison out of. He was getting rabid. In the meantime I was to look out for the pets, feed the chickens, keep the distillery going and meditate on the mysteries of life in general.

"I breathed a terrible sight easier after I saw his pink shirt and big white helmet fade over the top of the cliff; I could now take it cozy and comfortable for at least two days.

"With all the crazy dopes and medicines that cuss had around, and the designs he had on every living thing loose, I was beginning to feel unsafe in his company. I couldn't tell when he'd doctor my coffee on the sly and I'd find myself suddenly deader than an Aztec, to be brought back to life, maybe — maybe not. That day I just loafed around lazy, figuring on some scheme to get the Prof's attentions switched off on some other track. Every game has a counter-play of some kind.

"As I said, I thought I was all safe for a day or two at least, and that first night went to roost at sundown without

leaving any look-out on duty. I woke up sudden along after midnight. I don't remember *hearing* anything, I just *felt* something, and I opened my sleepy eyes and, over where the moonlight streamed in through the broken wall of the old shack, there squatted the Prof with his bicycle pump, his awls and other things, squinting at a dose of something he was dropping out of a bottle, with his thumb over the hole. I saw it all: He was getting ready to slide me into that there place where you needn't take your suitcase along, and a minute more and I would have been kicking my last. Did you ever see an antelope run? He leaves the ground and swims off through the air, then he floats down, springs, and swims off again. That's the way me and Prof Van Strenger parted company. I was the antelope. One yell and two bumps and I was out on the grass and I was moving. Going up that there trail I just made a blur along the face of the cliff, and when I hit the level, sandy desert up above, I just turned loose, let go, and stampeded for Colorado. They say an Apache will lope off and keep it up all day, but that's just loping. I was scorching the air, making a farewell yellow streak across the Nioche country. I was still running at daylight; by noon I was clear away, and I never went back, neither. I never even *looked* back. I've often thought about the Prof. and wondered what *did* become of the cuss and his Elixir, and whether he was really fixing up to take a shot at me with that squirt gun that night, or whether he was up to something else. Maybe he was just going to invigorate the burro, after all, or put some corn cure on a sore toe. Anyway, he didn't dope *me*."

The Bermuda Passenger.*

BY GUTHRIE KELLY.

IN a quiet nook of the Westminster café, two gentlemen were discussing the merits of an entertainment from which they had just returned. It was an exhibition of legerdemain by a noted Hindoo, whose tricks were novel and startling.

"Did you ever see a dead man walk, Doctor?" asked the younger.

"Why, no, that is — I have never seen a man walk after a physician had pronounced him dead."

"Well," laughed the first speaker, "I knew a case where a physician pronounced a man dead, and yet that man walked."

"How was that?"

"I was second engineer of an old tramp steamer out of Charleston, two years ago. You know I've knocked about a little and there were times when I was dead broke. This was one of them, or I would never have shipped aboard that boat. She was rotten enough to fall apart, and her engines were junk. But the captain was part owner, and when he got a cargo he didn't care, as long as she floated. He'd stop for nothing.

"One night we put to sea with a cargo of mixed freight, bound for Bermuda. The moon was very bright, and it was one of those quiet nights one meets in the semi-tropics. I was on deck sniffing a breath of salt air before beginning my watch below, when a motor boat suddenly slid from behind the breakwater and headed in our direction. We weren't more than two miles from the harbor, and were going as fast as the rickety engines would permit, but it didn't take long for that boat to get within hail. She was able to cut circles around our old craft.

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"As the boat came alongside, the captain ordered the engines slowed down, we passed a line to the speedy stranger, and soon had her two passengers aboard.

"One of them introduced himself as a member of the Charleston detective force, and said his companion was a police surgeon.

"'I'm sorry to delay you, Captain,' said the first, 'but you have a fugitive on board.'

"'Have I?' asked the old man, without lifting an eyebrow.

"'You have,' repeated the stranger. 'He's a bank robber, and a slick one, too. Held them up clean and easy at closing time this afternoon, single handed. Covered the teller and the bank cop, and scooped forty thousand dollars into a satchel. Then he beat it for the railroad yards. We hunted him until dark, and finally tracked him down to the docks. I know that he's on this ship, for the tug man told me he put a passenger on board just outside the harbor. The description tallies with our man, so just produce him, and do it sudden. And stop your old ship, too! I don't want to sail back from the middle of the Atlantic in a launch. Stop her, I say, till I get my man and start back with him, or else take us all back to Charleston.'

"'Go on and get your bank robber,' said the captain. 'He's aboard all right, or, anyhow, the fellow that came off the tug is here. He may be a bank robber or a preacher, or both, for all I know. He told us he wanted to go to Bermuda with us and as he didn't want the trip for nothing, and wanted to be let alone, I took him aboard. I know nothing about him, and I don't want to. You'll find him in the first stateroom from the companion way.'

"After saying this the captain walked forward to the bridge, and the detective called after him.

"'Look here! are you going to stop this ship?'

"'Did I say anything about stopping?' sneered the old man. 'No, sir, I didn't.' You're not in Charleston now, and I'm captain of this ship and boss out here. It takes a revenue cutter to make me heave to. Go and get your man if you ain't afraid to tackle him, and I'll tow your launch till you're ready to go back, or you can go on to Bermuda if you like. I'll make the passage cheap to you.'

"So the detective and the doctor went below. The captain and I followed them a moment later, but we had no intention of helping in the capture. We thought there would be a fight, and wanted to have a look.

"The two of them started for the stateroom, but the man inside seemed to know something was up, for before they reached the door he locked it.

"'He can't get out of there, can he, Cap?' asked the detective.

"'Not unless you get him out.'

"The taunt had some effect on the two, and after a little whispered conversation they made a rush. But this time when they turned the knob the door opened easily, and they both stumbled into the room.

"And there, lying across the bunk, was the man that came aboard from the tug. He was a tall, well dressed, genteel-looking chap, and after the visitors had recovered from their astonishment the doctor stepped up to the prostrate form and examined it.

"'Dead, and not a mark on him!' he exclaimed.

"Then a small object on the floor caught his eye, and he stooped and picked it up."

"'Here's the stuff that did it,' he exclaimed, holding up a small hypodermic syringe. Then he turned up the man's sleeve, and found a small puncture on his arm with a new acid burn just below it.

"'Hydrocyanic!' cried the doctor. 'He fixed himself when he saw the game was up. Well, he did it in a business-like manner.'

"'Gosh!' exclaimed the detective. 'Are you sure he's dead?'

"'Not the least doubt of that,' answered the doctor. 'No heart, no respiration, and he's getting cold already. When they use that stuff there isn't any room for doubt.'

"'And that's all I get for chasing him out here,' muttered the detective. 'But how about the satchel, Cap? What did he do with that?'

"'Nary a bit of luggage did he have with him,' said the captain. 'Not a bag or bundle.'

"They searched the cabin, but found nothing. His pockets

contained only the case that held the syringe, but pinned to his undershirt were a few new bills, about a hundred dollars in all.

"'That's little to show for all this trouble,' growled the detective.

"'Now, Cap, bring the ship to, while we settle this thing. I can't have him buried at sea, because I've got to show something. We can go on to Bermuda, though. We must be a long way out by this time.'

"The captain's manner had changed some since the latest developments.

"'I'll heave to long enough for us to talk it over,' he replied, adding, 'Come up on deck.'

"So we all went up and the captain gave orders to stop the engine. Then he turned round and addressed the detective.

"'Now, then,' he said, speaking in a more friendly tone, 'You can't take that chap to Bermuda. The crew won't stand for it. Sailormen are scared of anything of that kind, and I don't blame 'em. Dead men's society is not a thing I hanker after myself. The best thing for you to do is to get back in your launch. So I'll have the body and a couple of cans of gasoline put aboard, while you're taking another look to see if you can find that satchel you've been talking about.'

"The two detectives agreed, and renewed the search while the body and the gasoline were being put on the launch, but they found nothing. They were just on the point of climbing over the side when the captain called back:

"'To show there's no hard feelings on either side come down and have a nip,' he said, and as he included me in the invitation, we all went below again.

"The captain had just got the bottle uncorked when we heard something that sent us up the ladder in record time. It was the unmistakable cough of a gasoline engine, and when we got on deck that old motor boat was smashing away toward the horizon as hard as she could go. At the wheel was a figure that we had no difficulty in recognizing in the bright moonlight — it was the late corpse of the Bermuda passenger, and he was very much alive."

"Is that the end of the incident?" asked the doctor, as his companion leaned back in his chair.

"That's all worth telling," replied the story teller. "We swung round and chased that boat, but the detective said it was good for fifteen miles an hour, and as our old hulk could only make seven we gave it up. I remember the authorities tried to make it hot for the captain, but he got out of it. That old ark of his had a bad name with sailors on this side, so he took her to the Orient. Men didn't fancy sailing in *The Cuban — Cuban Queen* or *The Cuban Princess* or whatever her name was."

"It was *The Cuban Belle,*" said a voice near the speaker's elbow.

"Why, to be sure, it was *The Cuban Belle,*" cried the man who had told the story, turning as he spoke to the one who had supplied the information. "But how did you know?" he asked, after scrutinizing the other's features.

"I was in Charleston at the time and became interested in the case," replied the stranger. "Pardon me for overhearing your story, I couldn't help it. I happened to know of a few incidents you didn't mention."

"Then you will perhaps be able to tell us if the bank robber was in league with the captain," asked the narrator.

"You must draw your own conclusions concerning that," replied the other, smiling. "But when the robber saw the launch in pursuit he knew that he would certainly be taken prisoner. He went to his cabin and arranged his stage setting. He took his hypodermic syringe, filled it with hydrocyanic acid, and then, by opening the porthole he overheard the conversation that took place when the two officers came aboard. When they started for his cabin he emptied half the contents of the syringe through the porthole, and after making a puncture in his arm with a clean needle, he burned himself slightly near the spot with the acid. Then he unlocked the door and flung himself upon the berth and feigned death."

The two men listening to the explanation stared at the stranger.

"But — but," stammered the doctor, "the police surgeon examined the —"

"Oh, yes," interrupted the other, laughing easily, "but doctors, my dear sir, take much for granted. He saw an apparently lifeless man and a syringe containing hydrocyanic acid, and the two in

the mind of an imaginative man immediately conjures up the word 'suicide'."

The first narrator was watching the face of the stranger with increased interest.

"You say you were interested in the case," he said. "Were you on board?"

The stranger rose leisurely, buttoned his fur coat, handed the waiter the amount of his check and, bowing politely to the two others said, "I am the only man who has the right to contradict the doctor. One of those gasoline cans, by the way, happened to be a satchel, the contents of which were, in due time, divided by that old captain of yours and his Burmuda passenger."

He bowed again and passed quickly out into the night, leaving the doctor and the late second engineer of *The Cuban Belle* staring in astonishment at each other.

The Conversion.*

BY FLORENCE MARTIN EASTLAND.

HE silence was painfully embarrassing. Flora Harriman fidgeted in her seat at the back of the chapel, yet watched with troubled eyes two very young girls ahead of her. The fact that she sat well back indicated her religious standing. Only the orthodox with pronounced tendencies toward the relating of religious experiences were in sufficient favor to sit beneath the alert brown eyes and engaging smile of their mentor and youthful teacher, Elizabeth Jordan.

"The Lord is waiting for your decision, girls," came in Miss Jordan's rich, pleading voice. "There is work to do in foreign lands. Millions are in bondage waiting to hear of salvation. Will you carry them the glad tidings?" Again a pause, while the girls in front of Flora gazed at each other in agonized appeal.

Flora felt an odd sense of anger while struggling with an inclination to laugh at her fancy's picture — a million squatting creatures with tied hands and no interest in life except in the appearance of those round-bodied, pink-and-white girls ahead of her, whose mental disquiet at this time came from a confliction of duty to and desire for their fellow-men. Nothing seemed more absurd to Flora than that their red lips, made for kisses, should drop pearls of wisdom into the heathen ear, or that those soft hands, intended to grow firm through the discharge of domestic duties, should be the distributors of tracts and Bibles. Such a sacrifice of girlish dreams and natural purposes did this appear that when Miss Jordan remarked meaningly: "I realize that important decisions take time. Will some one start a hymn?" Flora began solemnly:

"On the other side of Jordan."

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The teacher's eyes sought the singer's, but, seeing no evidence of malice, she joined with the others. Not so the wrestling girls, who in a reaction after their painful soul-searching, bent over with shaking shoulders when the ridiculous application of the words occurred to them.

At the conclusion of the first stanza the teacher changed the hymn to one with more bearing on the subject, and at its close she said:

"Now, I'm going to talk to the Lord about this."

All through the prayer, which was offered in a purely conversational way, Flora was antagonized, as she had always been by the assumption of familiarity with the Deity. It reminded her of an evangelist she once heard who began his petitions as if he were at a telephone, with "Lord, this is George talking." She tried to overcome her prejudice by recounting the vast amount of good Miss Jordan had accomplished; of the interest she took in her pupils' progress in those branches, music and history, in which she was instructor; of her life full of active charities; of her godliness. But always rose this point of difference: The urging of girls — young girls who did not know their own minds — to take the foreign missionary pledge. While Miss Jordan's prayer carried the reminder that she was ready to go to any place at any time when the call came, Flora was thinking of the arguments of rebuttal which she would use on her way home with the teacher, who boarded at the same place as Flora.

Miss Jordan joined her at the door and, slipping her arm through the other's, said in a tone ringing with sincerity:

"Won't you ever see the work God intended you to do?"

"I hope so," Flora answered honestly, "but if it is foreign missions, I doubt it. Tell me why you are so eager to go."

"To save the millions in bondage," was the surprised answer. "Can you possibly rest when you think of their lost souls?"

"They don't disturb me half so much as those around us who have heard what you will say and are yet more hopelessly lost. Besides, I don't believe — But no matter. Are you sure it isn't more a desire for change that impels you to go?"

"Yes," the other answered firmly, too earnest to be offended,

"my personal inclinations I am glad to sacrifice. They are all I have to give, except my time."

"But, Miss Jordan, you were never intended for that. Why, your beautiful red hair alone, to say nothing of the temperament which goes with it, is a contradiction. It should grow silvery in the quiet of a home — and your tender voice has a glorious future if you devote it to lullabys as you rock a cradle."

"That would be a selfish limitation. It is good work, to be sure, but there would be no sacrifice in that."

"How do you know that the heathen women may not feel a mission to take the place in domestic life which you vacate, when you have shown them that the Bible teaches women to abide faithfully in their homes?"

"Now you are absurd."

"Perhaps. Tell me why you dropped woman's suffrage to take up foreign missions."

"I found greater light and saw a higher duty."

"Yes? And when you find something to take the place of missions — "

"There is nothing higher, my dear. That is the summit of God's work."

"Not the temperance work, nor the Sunday School, nor social purity? I remember when each of these was your one mission in life."

Miss Jordan smiled charmingly, exciting Flora's admiration, although the smile was one of tolerance for such amazing lack of progress.

"They are all good, necessary work, leading us to higher ideals, step by step; preparing us for the highest of all missions, the salvation of the heathen. I always work according to the light that is given me."

"If I were not convinced that you believe that, I should regard you as a most adorable humbug. And I still insist that an aureole like yours is best used for domestic illumination."

The girls parted, and, as Miss Jordan ascended the stairs, the other looked after her thoughtfully.

"What splendid ability she has," Flora reflected in humorous admiration. "With no apparent effort she rids herself of any

encumbering belief the minute she strikes a new thought, and she honestly thinks the last is of the greatest importance. She needs a balance-wheel."

Within a few days Flora quite accidentally confirmed her opinion that underneath Miss Jordan's consecration to the public good there lay at least a germ of yearning for the more restricted province of women. It was after a social evening at the chapel, where Miss Jordan had delighted the students with several musical numbers. To escape a persistent admirer, Flora had slipped away with a girl friend. She was returning alone, having seen the friend to her door, when into the unlighted by-street came a couple who slowly walked a little ahead of Flora.

With her thoughts upon other matters Flora followed, and for a time was unaware of what they were saying, but presently she recognized Miss Jordan's voice.

"You have done me a great honor, Mr. Williams — "

"Say Douglas," interrupted another familiar voice.

"A very great honor — Douglas. I would like to consider your proposal, truly. I can fancy no greater joy than the peace and security of love and home, except the joy of working for the Lord. I wish I might believe He intended me for such a mission. I have talked to Him about it since our conversation a week ago — but I still feel there is other work for me."

Flora tried to close her ears to the words, to walk more slowly still. For excellent reasons she did not wish the two to know she was behind, one being the fact that the man — he was still a very young man — had once been as ardent in his pursuit of Flora herself, and even a month before had assured her he was still on her "waiting-list." In spite of her efforts, the young man's words now floated back distinctly:

"Then let me go with you. I may not be efficient in winning souls, but I can make your way easier. Take my name and the world's goods I possess, and as you value the salvation of a soul, take me."

Reaching another street, Flora followed it for a block in order to avoid hearing more. She must have walked very rapidly, however, to reach her gate just behind them as Miss Jordan concluded with — "At all events, we must wait till my for-

eign work is ended. Remember I do not hold you to the agreement — "

Her words ceased as Flora displayed an alarming bronchial tendency which covered the embarrassing silence. Both regarded Flora suspiciously, but she regained her voice long enough to observe, carelessly:

"I thought as I came across the street just now that I had seen your backs before. How is that for an Irish bull?"

"Good," responded Williams in a tone of relief.

"Have you heard?" inquired Miss Jordan as she took out her latchkey.

Flora started guiltily. "Ever since I was a child; for, fortunately, I was born with a well-developed sense of hearing."

The flippant reply passed over her companion, whose lack of humor was as great as the seriousness with which she took herself.

"The call has come through the church Board of Foreign Missions. I will leave in four weeks for Korea, immediately after the graduating exercises."

"To be gone — ?"

"Four years. I wish you would go with me. You have sufficient means to go independently."

"I think I can use them to better purpose. Besides, I should probably convince you during that time that your place is at home, and in the reaction your choice would be limited to a queueless native or a dyspeptic co-worker of the stronger sex."

Miss Jordan sighed: "You won't take my intentions seriously — yet, some way, I am never offended."

In the busy days which preceded commencement exercises Flora had few private opportunities for talking to the teacher who, with an intensified aureole, was youthfully enjoying the pedestaled position her sacrifice had won. The missionary meetings became a spiritual feast, and the various churches were embarrassed by the proffered services of inexperienced girls who wished transportation to the ends of the earth. Flora attended the last meeting, held the evening of Miss Jordan's departure. Williams was present with an air of pensive interest not altogether due to the benighted state of the heathen.

His lingering gaze, which followed the teacher, seemed fraught with the mournful phrase, "Four years. F-o-u-r y-e-a-r-s!" — but Flora smilingly shook her head as she thought:

"She won't last that length of time. Her mind is too active and her hair too red."

Upon the table, heaped with incongruous gifts to Miss Jordan, Flora placed twenty-five dollars in an envelope bearing the direction: "For personal use only."

The last prayer was said, the last hymn sung, and most of the farewells over, when Flora presented herself.

"I've heard twenty-seven ask you to write, so I'm not going to be the twenty-eighth. I shall hear of you — Miss Jordan blushed a little as her brown eyes sought Williams's — "and that will suffice until I see you again."

"Good-bye, dear Flora."

"No — auf Wiedersehen."

The next day Flora also departed, but her unimportant mission was to take charge of an orphanage while its busy matron enjoyed a much-needed vacation. Just before leaving, Williams, who had rather avoided her of late, confessed his provisionary engagement to Miss Jordan and asked permission to resume his calls on Flora when both were again in their home town. To her cordial assertion that his engaged condition need not affect their friendship he answered with his former frankness:

"Of course not — and it will be such a pleasure to talk to you about her and to read you her letters."

No sooner had Flora reached her own home a month later than Williams promptly appeared. There was a curious sense of constraint about him that at once awakened Flora's suspicions, but, preferring to let him take the initiative, she carefully avoided mentioning Miss Jordan's name. So did he. He came again the next evening, with lines of determination about his mouth, and again he departed without unbosoming himself. But the third evening he tramped in grimly, nor paused for conventional greeting till he had eased his mind:

"I haven't heard from her yet."

"Truly?"

"Cross my heart to die," he answered, in an attempt to lighten

his — mortification, Flora decided. "She was going to stop off several places to visit distant relatives — they're all she has, you know — and I was to write in care of the steamship company in Seattle. Well, I didn't hear from her before she reached Seattle, as I thought I should, nor from that point either, and I concluded she was too busy to write before sailing, but that I would receive a letter just as soon as she reached a foreign port. Not a word has come from her and last week my own letter was returned by the steamship company."

"They must have neglected to give it to her."

"I thought so, for of course she sailed. I should certainly have heard if she hadn't."

"What have you done?"

"Nothing; what could I do?"

"I think if I were a waiting lover I should write to the Board of Foreign Missions under whose protection she started."

"That's so. Strange I didn't think of that before. I'll write now. Give me some stationery, will you?"

The letter was despatched and the succeeding two weeks passed pleasantly enough except for an occasional spasm of anxiety on the young man's part. Flora was becoming decidedly uneasy, when Williams at length brought an answer from the Board. It was brief almost to the point of curtness, merely stating that a few weeks previous Miss Jordan had returned the money provided for her expenses and informed them that she had found a higher mission in her own land. She gave no address.

"What do you suppose it is?" Flora demanded. "If you had been along with her I could have hazarded an opinion."

"Yes," was the skeptical rejoinder, "my being with her would have had a lot of weight. I suppose right now the thought of the bond between us is occupying all her time, wherever she is."

"But where? where? I never heard of such a complete disappearance of a luminary!"

During the ensuing year the two often repeated their question. No amount of inquiry had elicited any information. Letters from other college students all bore the same observation: "I thought of course you would know what has become of her."

Curiosity had long since replaced concern when Flora went to Kansas City for a visit.

One Sunday morning, while on her way to services at a church of her own faith, the car-line to which she would transfer was temporarily disabled. The distance being too great for walking, she decided to stroll along until she came to a church whose invitation was insistent. She passed a half-dozen before the impulse to enter a little gray wooden structure, with a jangling bell in a squatty tower, was stronger than the seduction of the cool, shady street.

She was barely seated in the rear of the fast-filling room when the little organ softly took up the welcome of the jangling bell, and, looking up, Flora's mouth opened in astonishment at a sight of Miss Jordan's bright, earnest face above the instrument. Presently the choir filed in, and in the good singing Flora recognized the teacher's voice and direction. Before the sermon began, when the choir was settling itself, the organist disappeared behind a curtain, reappearing in time to resume her place at the organ at the conclusion of the address.

Flora watched her eagerly, noting a puzzling change which could not be located all at once. "No, she doesn't look a day older, and she is prettier than ever. It must be the new way of dressing her hair that gives her the matronly air and poise. This is the first time I have seen it parted and waved, and she looks a perfect Madonna."

There was a mother's meeting announced to take place at the end of the services. Flora, hunting in her purse for a coin for the collection plate, missed part of the minister's words, but caught, somewhat indistinctly, "with Miss Jordan to lead, as usual." Flora remained for the meeting.

"Now, mothers," the leader began in exactly the old way, "let us each have a silent talk with the Lord. If you have a burden, just tell Him about it. No one has a greater right than we mothers."

"'We mothers'!" thought Flora. "What does she mean?" At once she remembered a time when Miss Jordan seriously considered the adoption of a deserted child. "That's what she has done. Maybe she's mothering a dozen or so. I wouldn't be surprised."

The meeting was tantalizingly long to Flora, who tried in vain to verify her conclusion. Once, indeed, she was certain she was on the right track when the leader remarked:

"Teach your children to obey. Obedience is the first training mine will get."

Concluding that Miss Jordan's statement was but potential, Flora promptly reversed her judgment when the speaker closed her address:

"There is no love so charitable, so nearly the divine forgiveness, as a mother's for her own child. Nor is there any woman's work so great as the shaping of the future generations through the spiritual and moral training she gives to her children. I surrendered a larger opportunity for work because I was convinced I could accomplish more in a quieter way. Is there, dear mothers, any higher ambition than that reward promised in the words, 'Her children shall rise up and call her blessed'?"

The meeting was scarcely done when Flora pushed her way to the leader. Her long-pent curiosity found vent during her greeting in the exclamation:

"Before I die, Elizabeth Jordan, tell me just what you are doing."

"I have found my mission."

"Which one?" demanded her exasperated friend.

Without a word she led Flora to a little room back of the altar, where the minister was shaking a perambulator with more vigor than discretion.

"This is my husband, Miss Harriman, and —"

"But I thought he called you Miss Jordan," Flora protested, extending a limp hand.

"No — Mrs. Gordon. And this," with a look of pride at the round-faced occupant of the perambulator, "is my son."

"Which is the heathen?" Flora mischievously inquired.

With a blush Mrs. Gordon continued:

"I have found woman's highest mission without seeking it at the ends of the earth. If we only knew, our greatest work lies all around us in simple duties. My husband has shown me the way to find them.

It took many questions to get the facts, but Flora at length

learned that the embryo missionary, stopping over in Kansas City to visit, had attended a revival where Mr. Gordon, an evangelist, was attracting vast crowds; that she organized a choir and conducted the singing for two weeks, and at the end of the meetings saw how much good she could do at home. There was a significant gap in the evidence — but Flora's ability to put two and two together filled it with the surmise that but three weeks elapsed between their meeting and their marriage. No wonder Williams was neglected.

"But I must get the baby home, my dear. We have another service at two o'clock. Do come to see me to-morrow, when we can have a gossipy chat about all the old friends."

She tucked in a corner of the baby's afghan while her husband went forward to open the door.

"You may be interested to know," she confided, "that he is the best husband in the world. He has given up evangelism. He thinks so much more good can be accomplished by every-day contact with people. And by the way, your parting gift, 'For personal use only,' purchased my wedding dress. Yes, dear, I am coming. I will look for you to-morrow, then."

The Green that Walked.*

BY JOHN L. CONSIDINE.

"APTAIN," said the man on Post No. 13, "I'd like to be relieved. A couple of weeks' rest might put me right again."

"What's the matter? Sick?"

"Not exactly that, Captain. It's my eyes: I've been seeing things."

The captain of the guard eyed the man sharply.

"Been drinking?"

"No, sir. It's not that — no pink rats, nor blue monkeys, nor anything of that sort. The fact is," and here he lowered his voice to the level of a confidential whisper, although the nearest man was the guard on Post No. 12, three-score yards away, "I've been seeing the grass walk."

"What's that?" snapped the captain.

"It's a fact, sir. I didn't pay so much attention to it at first, but now that it's happened three times, I'm beginning to think that my eyes are going back on me, or else that I'm getting hallucinations."

The captain looked at Guard No. 13 in dismay. Hitherto he had regarded this man as one of his sanest and steadiest subordinates.

"Tell me about it," he commanded.

"There's nothing to it, much, except that every afternoon a patch of grass out there in the alfalfa field begins to move slowly toward the south. At first I thought it was the bay breeze, rolling through the grass, but then, I recollected, its wave was toward the bay. Besides, it seemed to me that this grass just picked itself up in a patch, and moved along, independent of the grass around."

"Does this movement always start from the same point?"

"No; each day it begins a little further south."

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"Hum! A little closer to the south — a little closer to the bay, that is. At any regular time?"

"Why, I hadn't thought of that. Yes; let me see. Yes, I believe it was at the same time each afternoon. From half-past two to three, say."

The captain glanced at his watch.

"It's 2:35 now," he said. "Do you see anything?"

The guard peered long and carefully to the southward.

"Yes, sir," he responded. "It's on me again — the grass moves."

"Where?" inquired the captain.

The guard pointed to a spot near where the alfalfa field met the fence-line. Sure enough, as it seemed to the captain, a patch of green, probably six feet in length and three in width, was making speedy progress in the direction of the fence.

"Take aim," shot from the captain's lips. "Can you hit it?"

The guard raised his rifle, but with shaking hands.

"Let me have it," cried the other, with a scornful gesture.

Steeling his nerves, the guard fired. The grass was still.

The captain ran down the stairs, and toward it. Regardless of possible reprimand, the guard followed. Arrived at the spot, the officer stooped to lift, and examine, an ingenious contrivance. It consisted of two layers of burlap sacking, the upper one bearded with grass. The space between had been filled with loam, and from this, planted in wheat, the green blades had forced their way through the loosely-guarded interstices of the upper piece of cloth.

While the captain surveyed with admiration undisguised this novel garb of living green, the form of its designer, a man in stripes, with shaven head, lay at his feet.

And beside the body, stricken with vain regret, knelt Guard No. 13.

"The first I ever killed," he muttered dumbly. "May God forgive me!"

The Quest of the Signet.*

BY ALBERT W. TOLMAN.

WHY should John Barrington pay a civil engineer five pounds a day and expenses to accompany him to India? I had answered his advertisement in the *Times,* and received the compliment of being selected from forty-odd applicants. But up to the day of sailing he had told me nothing about my work.

"A mere oversight," thought I. "He is busy with his preparations. He will tell me on the steamer."

But he didn't. I found him a generous employer, a pleasant companion, capital at a song or a story, not averse to cigars or cards, in short, a cheerful, whole-souled English gentleman. He talked freely of everything in the world save himself and his plans. On these points he was deaf and dumb. The wider I opened my eyes and ears, the tighter he shut his mouth. I knew nothing at London, at Bombay I knew still less. But the Bank of England notes crisped under my fingers promptly at each week-end, and why should I complain?

I never saw a man change as Barrington did the day he reached India. Cheerfulness fell from him like a mask. He reincarnated as the personification of gloom and silence.

I was just unlocking my trunk in my room at the Royal in Bombay, when he tapped and stumbled in. His face was mottled paste, his knees knocked together, he was in the bluest of funks. Handing me a telegram, he collapsed on a chair, muttering:

"If the steamer had been a day late!"

The message said:

"Come."

"Our train leaves in forty minutes," gasped Barrington, and went out. It was no use unpacking. I turned my trunk key

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back again, and met him at the station. Presently we were rumbling northeast.

Ah, India, mother of mysteries! many are thy unsolved riddles, but from Indus to Brahmaputra, from the Himalayas to Ceylon, amidst all thy teeming millions, prince or ryot, pariah or saint, juggler or Brahmin, was none more mysterious than the man whose gold I fingered and whose salt I ate.

As we rolled on through purgatorial days and nights, his lineaments, once so pleasant, underwent a gradual change. His jaw grew grimmer and more determined, his cheeks hollowed, dark circles rimmed his blood-flecked eyes, he spoke in monosyllables or not at all. He had become a man of ice and stone and iron.

His glaring eye saw something I could not see. He was in the grip of an idea that, unmastered, would destroy him, body and soul.

When a man neither talks, eats, drinks nor sleeps, you can't take much pleasure in his company. I was earning my five pounds a day now, and not enjoying it either.

Above all it was evident that Barrington was feverishly eager to reach his destination. The last hundred miles we made with a private car and special engine along a branch line at the base of the Himalayas. He interviewed the locomotive-driver before starting, and I caught the glint of gold passing from hand to hand. Whether that had anything to do with our speed I was not sure, but we made our last century at a tremendous pace.

The mighty peaks above us were crimsoning with sunset, as we panted up to the little terminal station. Two horses stood there, saddled and waiting. Barrington flung himself on one, I mounted the other, and we dashed off at a gallop.

Up, up, up, ever up! Over steep, narrow roads, rocky trails and native bridges, again and again holding our lives in our finger-tips.

Two hours, and another relay waited us. Two more, and a third. Barrington led, like a man perfectly familiar with the route. An insane dread of some invisible peril seemed to spur him on. The farther we got, the faster he wanted to go.

"If we should be too late," he kept muttering.

At midnight, under a full unclouded moon, we emerged suddenly from a pine forest upon a rock-strewn slope. Above towered the land of perpetual snow. Before us, white and tall, gleamed the end of a great glacier. At its edge the blaze of a campfire fell upon pitched tents.

My companion pulled in his sweating horse. I reeled, saddle-sore. My muscles were aching, my eyes and brain were dull from want of sleep.

Troll-like, from the ground sprang a brown man, and laid hand on Barrington's bridle. Excitement flamed in his eyes, his voice trembled.

"They have come," said he, "at last."

"They have been long in coming," replied my employer.

"To-morrow is the day," continued the Hindu. "I feared thou mightest not be here."

"Only death could have kept me," answered Barrington, dismounting. "Lead on, Ramon."

We followed the Hindu over the débris at the foot of the glacier. A hundred feet below, the slope terminated abruptly in a sheer cliff above a black ravine, into which the water from the melting ice fell with a distant murmur.

At the centre of the wall Ramon halted.

"Behold!" exclaimed he, pointing toward the ice. We looked in the clear radiance of the moon.

At first I could distinguish only three dark shadows inside the crystal cliff; but, as my eyes grew accustomed to the light, I made out the figures of three men.

They were embedded in solid ice about two feet from the surface. I saw at once that the central figure was that of an Englishman. His face was burned dark, and his aquiline nose was an exact counterpart of Barrington's. On the little finger of his left hand, which extended slightly forward, was a large seal ring. The other men, about a yard on either side of him, were evidently natives.

I gazed in speechless wonder. Barrington, too, looked with equal interest, as one who sees for the first time. Then the Hindu broke the silence, salaaming, saluting the motionless central figure:

"Hail, lord! Expected one, hail! Thou hast come at last. Thy way has been long and silent and dark and cold. Five summers has thy servant watched for thee. And now his task is over."

His words roused Barrington. He turned to me.

"Allow me," he said, "to present my grandfather, Sir Reginald Clonmel. I have never seen him before; but, as an heir in the direct line, I may presume to introduce him. Pardon him, if his welcome seem somewhat cold. I am sorry we cannot ask him to the fire, and offer him refreshment; but, as that is out of the question, we can do the next best thing by partaking of it ourselves."

His grandfather! Unless I was greatly mistaken, the dead man was at least ten years younger than Barrington.

Spat! Something smashed into the ice over our heads, and a report rang out from the dark pine slope across the ravine. Spat! Spat! Barrington pulled me hastily back toward the camp; but he showed no surprise. The moment we withdrew from the front of the glacier the firing ceased.

"So!" said my companion, coolly. "The Duke compliments me. He thinks I am not so mad after all. He has more brains than I credited him with."

To me he remarked:

"Those bullets came from England."

We returned to the fire, and Ramon changed from the herald of the dead to the best of chefs and butlers. Soon the coffee bubbled cheerfully above the crackling wood. Ere long we broke our fast on broiled deer-steaks, unheeding the frozen men entombed in the groaning glacier, and the tiger yelling above the sough of the pines far below.

It was a strange midnight feast in that Himalayan gorge, under the cold moon and stars. I stole frequent glances at the Hindu and my employer. Were they not a brace of madmen? Was I not mad myself? But I was fearfully hungry and tired. So I ate without comment.

The meal over, Barrington looked at his watch. It was past one o'clock. He turned to me.

"You saw the signet ring on my grandfather's little finger?"

I nodded.

"To get that ring I have come from England. It is of incalculable value to me, not for its own worth, though that is very great, but for a certain paper contained in a hollow beneath the stone. My father died of a broken heart for want of what that paper proves, for to him it was irrevocably lost. If I do not recover it, I shall never return to England, but shall go down with my grandfather into that ravine, which will be our family tomb."

He paused.

"It's a long story, and we're both tired. I'll tell it to you to-morrow,— after I get the ring. Sleep well. Good-night."

He indicated one of the tents. Outside sat the Hindu, rifle across his knees.

"I will watch," said he.

I entered, and lay down on my pallet. Between dead men upright in glaciers, grandsires younger than their children's children, and bullets that came five thousand miles, my head was whirling. But I was utterly weary, and soon fell asleep.

A loud explosion brought me to my feet. I rushed outside. It was morning, and the sun had already risen. High in the still blue an eagle was floating. Grand, snowy peaks, rosy in the dawn, towered all about us.

Barrington and the Hindu were gazing at the glacier. The sound that had roused me was the splitting open of a fresh crevasse. I noted that the ice had advanced two feet during the night.

On the slope before the entombed men rose a six-foot barricade of stones. My two companions had evidently improved the hours of darkness after moon-set. It was perfectly quiet across the gorge. The black pines came down close to the brink of the precipice. No human being was in sight, but I suspected that some one lurked behind the close trunks.

Said Barrington:

"Let us bid good-morning to my ancestor."

We stepped out toward the barricade. Was the unseen marksman on the watch? Answering my thought, a bullet sang across the ravine.

"Our friend is faithful to his post," observed Barrington nonchalantly. "He must have breakfasted early, if at all. A poor marksman, however! The Duke should have hired a better. But he was always close. His economy in this case may cost him his dukedom."

Safely behind the barricade we examined the figures in the sunlight. The flawless crystal revealed them, to the slightest detail. Again I noted how remarkably the central figure resembled Barrington; indeed, it might have been a younger brother.

My employer interrupted my observations.

"And now to business," said he. "I want you, as an engineer, to give me your opinion on the best way to get that ring. At any cost we must recover it to-day, and that before the sun rises too high. Great changes may take place in the glacier at any moment. Should another crevasse open above, the whole front may slide into the ravine, and the ring be hopelessly lost. We must remember, too, our friend across the way. Pity we had no time to raise the barricade higher."

I took account of the situation. The ice was already steaming in the hot eastern sun. The glacier was set on a hair-trigger—it would not do to jar it with axe-strokes. Then, too, there were the bullets! I straightened up incautiously, and one slit my hat. The fellow was not so bad a marksman after all.

We hurried back to the tents, accelerated by two or three bullets. I made a détour to the top of the glacier. The fresh crevasse had an ominous look. Besides, a little back from the edge of the ice-cliff hung a rock weighing several tons. I returned and reported to Barrington.

"To work under there will peril your life; that rock may fall at any second."

He made a gesture of impatience.

"You know how cheaply I hold my life, if I do not get that ring. What I want is—"

A terrible grinding interrupted him. The glacier moved forward about two yards, overthrowing the barrier. For an instant it appeared about to slide into the ravine. Barrington uttered a cry of despair.

The motion stopped. He seized a hunting knife. I put my hand on his shoulder.

"What are you going to do?" I asked. He shook me off roughly.

"Get the signet," he replied.

I tightened my grasp; I was stronger than he.

"You shall not go to certain death."

"Ramon!" he cried, angrily. A rifle-muzzle touched my neck. I turned, and looked into the cold black orbs of the Hindu.

"Let him go!" commanded Ramon; and I did. Barrington darted forward.

"You shall pay for this, if you have made me lose my only chance!" he screamed, as he flew over the rough slope below the glacier. A fusillade broke from across the gorge. We caught a glimpse of a figure in khaki dodging behind a large pine.

Ramon pushed a rifle into my hands.

"Shoot, shoot!" cried he; and we sent bullet after bullet toward the tree that concealed the marksman.

Meanwhile Barrington was slashing away at the ice before the entombed figures. Fragments from the summit dropped around him; the huge rock seemed about to fall. Despite our attempts to stop him the man across the gorge was pumping bullets like a Gatling; we could see the ice splinter about Barrington. Once he staggered, as if hit, but recovered himself, and kept on working.

The stranger's eagerness made him careless — he exposed a shoulder. I put a bullet through it. He dropped his gun, and sprang out, disclosing a tall figure with a yellow beard. Ramon, before I could stop him, fired again. The man threw up his arms, fell headlong toward the brink of the cliff, and dropped out of sight.

The glacier was tottering; it would surely fall in a few seconds. Even the stolid Ramon, realizing this, added his shriek to mine:

"Back! Back!"

Barrington had worked feverishly, not heeding the shots. I think he did not even know when they ceased. The prize was now within his grasp. With one final slash he severed the

finger, and darted toward us, just as the enormous mass lurched forward. Safety was near, when he stumbled and fell. At the risk of his own life Ramon dragged him back, while the entire front of the glacier thundered down into the ravine, burying the body of the stranger beneath thousands of tons of ice and rock.

In his tent Barrington carefully removed the signet from the freshly bleeding finger. He pried out the stone. In a little cavity beneath lay a tightly folded sheet of thin tissue. With shaking hands he smoothed this out. As he read the words it bore, his face became the face of the man who has fought, and after years of struggle has won.

"Seventy years ago," said he, "my grandfather, Sir Reginald Clonmel, accompanied by native guides, was exploring the Rawal Glacier several miles north of here. While crossing a deep, narrow crevasse, thinly covered with snow, he suddenly disappeared with two of his men. There was no possible way of recovering the bodies, or even of locating the spot, as a three-days' storm of terrible severity obliterated all trace of the crevasse.

"Before leaving England on this fatal trip my grandfather had fallen in love with a beautiful young girl, the daughter of a London tradesman. It was the old story. His relatives did not consider her family high enough in the social scale, and so opposed his marriage. Nevertheless they were married secretly before my grandfather embarked. Three months after his death a son, my father, was born.

"The death of the clergyman who had performed the ceremony, and the destruction of the parish records by interested parties, made it impossible for my grandmother to enforce her claim to Sir Reginald's title and estate. The only existing documentary proof of their wedding was a tissue copy of the certificate, contained in a secret compartment of the ring which she had given her husband. And that ring had gone down with him into the depths of the Rawal.

"So Sir Reginald's brother succeeded to his estate, and treated our branch of the family as impostors.

"Before my father died, he told me of this ring and what

it contained. You can surmise the rest. I knew that a glacier flowed like a river, and that in time whatever fell into its upper course would emerge at its end. For years I studied the Rawal. The work fascinated me, for somewhere in the ice under my feet was my grandfather with his signet.

"Taking all things into account, I figured that Sir Reginald would appear during the present summer, though not so early by a full month. I had set Ramon here to watch, with orders to heliograph the news from the peak above to the nearest telegraph station. You know the rest. This is the only day in all eternity when I could have succeeded.

"By the way," he continued, "describe the man whom Ramon shot."

I did so. Barrington listened intently. Then he spoke.

"I was mistaken in one thing: Those bullets did not come from England. Instead, they were fired by the duke in person, — the ex-duke I should say. He was watching the glacier, too. He was keener and bolder than I thought. I do not blame him. An English dukedom is a prize well worth fighting for. Had he been a better shot, he would still be duke, and I—"

He shrugged his shoulders and glanced toward the ravine, then up at the glorious mountain, piercing white in the sunlight.

"There are worse places for a tomb than the terminal of the Rawal. They have a magnificent monument."

"Sir Reginald's finger I shall preserve in alcohol, and take home to be placed in an urn in my family vaults. And now to something more cheerful."

He drew from his pocket the miniature of a beautiful woman.

"Let me show you my affianced wife, the future Duchess of Clonmel."

Where the Lines Meet.*

BY FRANK X. FINNEGAN.

[Here is a typical BLACK CAT story, which appeared in this magazine five years ago. It is reprinted at the request of many friends, one of whom, Mr. A. E. Snyder of Seattle, supplements his request by the following interesting letter, which shows how a simple Fact may be Profitably utilized as the foundation for Fascinating Fiction. The author of the story received a cash prize of $100: Department of the Interior, General Land Office, Washington, D. C., April 22, 1908. Mr. A. E. Snyder, Seattle, Washington. Sir: I am in receipt of your letter dated April 5, 1908, making inquiry as to whether or not the States of Colorado and Utah and the Territories of Arizona and New Mexico come together at exactly one point. In reply you are advised that the southwest corner of Colorado, the northwest corner of New Mexico, the northeast corner of Arizona and the southeast corner of Utah are defined by a single point known as the "four corners" which is marked upon the ground by a stone mound in the centre of which is the corner stone 7 x 7 inches, firmly set in the ground. Very respectfully, Fred Dennett, Commissioner.]

THERE is a spot in the southwestern part of this country where a man may stand at one moment upon the soil of two States and two Territories; where, if he moves but a step in either direction, he may be entirely within the boundaries of one commonwealth, with another lying beneath his eyes and the two Territories so close that his shadow, cast by the noonday sun, may fall on both of them. In all the broad expanse of the United States, with its hundreds of State lines crossing one another, there is no other place where this is possible. It was toward this spot that a man on a jaded cow pony rode through a driving storm one April night. His broad-brimmed hat was pulled well down to protect his face from the beating rain, and the reins hung loose upon the horse's drooping neck, for the cayuse knew the trail across the mesa better than its master in the blackness of the night.

To the rider's left the San Juan River, swollen to twice its normal width by the spring rains, roared and tumbled between its banks, and at times the horse splashed through a pool where the river had overflowed the trail, but the man paid little heed to the

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floundering footsteps of his horse and only pulled the collar of his rough coat more closely about his throat as he bowed before the increasing gale. At length the cayuse quickened its steps and raised its head as a twinkling light glimmered through the blackness far ahead. The man roused himself in sympathy with the livelier motion of his horse, the light caught his eye, and with an oath he brought his rawhide quirt down on the horse's flank as he stared through the darkness.

The surprised cayuse bounded forward with renewed energy and in a few minutes stopped before a rough shack, through the window of which the light was gleaming. The man threw himself from the horse, bounded to the door and flung it open. In the single room of the cabin he saw a heavily built, forbidding-looking man seated near a table, smoking and vainly trying by the light of the smoky lamp to read a soiled fragment of a month-old newspaper. He looked up when the door was burst open and surveyed the intruder calmly.

"Hello, Bill," he said after a moment, during which the two men stared at each other; "I was waitin' for you."

"I see you was," said the man at the door, "an' you seem to be makin' yourself at home while you're waitin'." In his astonishment he had forgotten his horse and he took a step inside the shack as if to escape the drenching rain and the wind which was roaring up from the southwest. Then he remembered that he had not yet given the animal shelter and he paused.

"Wait till I put the horse up," he said. "I'll be back."

"Oh, I know you will, Bill," said the man at the table, lightly. "I ain't afraid you're goin' to run away."

The rain-soaked man at the door hesitated as though to speak again, started out, turned again toward the man at the table, who smilingly surveyed his every move, and at last stepped outside, closed the door and led his tired horse to the lean-to behind the shack, where he tethered it for the night. By the time he had again reached the door of the cabin his features had undergone a decided change, and the surly look of defiance with which he had first met the smiling face of the other man had given place to an expression almost equally cheerful. He closed the door of the shack carefully, that the howling wind might not burst it open,

crossed the room and seated himself on the edge of a tumbled bed near the western wall of the cabin. Watching the man near the table with a furtive smile he fished a blackened pipe from his pocket, rapped it on the edge of the bed, blew into it, and said:

"If you don't mind bein' obligin', I'd just as soon have a pipeful of that tobacco you're smokin'."

"Sure," said the man at the table, drawing out a greasy pouch. "Come an' take all you want."

The man on the bed eyed him narrowly a moment, knocked his pipe against his horny palm once or twice, and said:

"I'd rather you'd toss it over."

"What's the odds?" asked the man at the table, lightly, but he tossed the pouch over and his companion filled and lighted his pipe. When the blue clouds were adding their mite to the closeness of the atmosphere, the man at the table turned sharply to the man on the bed.

"Bill," he said, "I don't s'pose it'll take much talk from me to explain what I'm here for. I been lookin' for you for a month all over Montezuma County, an' I said to the boys I wouldn't come back without you. I sort of lost track of you for a spell until a cow puncher up near M'Elmo told me you had built this shack down here near the San Juan an' I come right on here to get you. Not findin' you at home, I made myself comfortable, knowin' you'd come sooner or later. Do you want me to tell you what I come for?"

"Sure," said Bill. "I know I never sent for you, Tom M'Kinney, an' I'd get along here powerful comfortable for a long time if you didn't make it no point to drop in on me."

"Well, maybe so," admitted M'Kinney, slowly; "but you see, Bill, my comin' ain't what the folks back in the States refer to as a social call. It's more connected with business, you know, Bill, seein' as how I've got in my pocket a warrant for the arrest of one Bill Gordon for the crime of horse stealin', contrary to the peace an' order of Montezuma County, Colorado. I reckon you won't deny that you're Bill Gordon, leastways not to me, that has knowed you for twelve years, an' I don't expect you're goin' to cut up rough about it, because you've knowed me the same length of time."

Bill Gordon smoked thoughtfully a few moments, with the shadow of a smile on his features.

"No, Tom," he said at length, "I ain't goin' to deny that I'm Bill Gordon, but I'm sorry that you've come all this way in such bad weather just to tell me that, because you'll have to leave your warrant in your pocket an' go back without me."

The smile vanished from M'Kinney's face, giving way to a fierce glare which no whit dismayed the complacent Bill Gordon.

"I'll have to go back without you?" repeated M'Kinney. "Don't you reco'nize me as the sheriff of Montezuma County, State of Colorado?"

"Surely," said Gordon calmly, blowing a big cloud of smoke.

"Then I place you under arrest," thundered M'Kinney, rising with a hand upon the butt of his revolver as though in expectation of resistance.

Bill Gordon still continued to sit on the edge of the bed and smoke and he even smiled at the warlike move of the sheriff.

"No, you don't place me under no arrest, neither," he finally declared, looking fearlessly into the sheriff's eyes.

"Why don't I?" asked the surprised M'Kinney. Resistance he was ready for, but this calm and unmoved refusal of Bill Gordon to be arrested staggered him.

"Because," answered Gordon, with a final smile of triumph, "I ain't in Colorado!"

"You ain't *what?*" thundered the sheriff.

"I ain't in Colorado," repeated Gordon, with the same calm smile of assurance. "You are," he went on hastily, seeing that M'Kinney evidently thought he was insane, "but I ain't. You see, the line runs right through my shack. Bed's in Utah, chair is in Colorado. That nail keg over there is in Arizony and that old saddle in the other corner's in New Mexico. I'm on the bed, so I'm in Utah an' you can't serve no warrant in Utah, Tom. You'll admit that?"

"Sure, I admit that," said Sheriff M'Kinney in a dazed and uncertain way.

"Well, then," continued the imperturbable Gordon, "your warrant ain't no good. All I've got to do is to stay over here in Utah an' you can't touch me."

"But — but how'd you know where the line was?" demanded the sheriff suspiciously. He had recovered from the first shock of surprise and was preparing for fight again. "How do I know this ain't a game you're puttin' up on me? I'd make a fine figure goin' back to M'Elmo with a yarn like that, wouldn't I? I'd be run out of town before I could resign."

"Lemme tell you about it," said Gordon, stretching himself comfortably on the bed. He was no longer in fear of the sheriff's warrant and was eager to expatiate upon his great scheme. "I seen it all set out in a newspaper about a month ago about this here place. I was up to Monticello, up here on the Utah side, you know, an' I found a newspaper kickin' around there what had all this in it. It told how the State lines of Colorado an' Utah an' Arizony an' New Mexico all come together in a bunch an' how four cowboys could sit on their horses an' hold hands an' all be in different States. An' it went on about how the cowboys had built up a pile of stones to mark the spot where all the four lines come together an' it had a picture of the pile of stones an' four men on horses all holdin' hands."

Bill paused to refill his pipe from the pouch beside him and as he did so he was reminded of the earlier incident of the evening.

"That's why I wanted you to toss me your tobacco," he said. "I didn't want to take a chance in Colorado for a minute."

"I wish I had knowed it then," grunted the sheriff. "I mightn't have been so obligin'."

"Well, I got to thinkin' about that thing," went on Gordon when the pipe was well alight, "an I got to wonderin' if that wouldn't be a handy place to live. You know, lots of fellows build their shacks on the line between two States because they may not want to stay in one State all the time. There is occasions when many a man wants to move along a little an' if he can do it by movin' across the room it saves lots of travelin'. But, thinks I, s'posin' a fellow has two visitors at once that wants to have a little chat with him, one from each State? Then what? thinks I. An' it struck me that if a fellow could live in about four States — not more than four — it might often come handy."

"There ain't no manner of doubt," interrupted Sheriff M'Kinney, "that it would for you, Bill."

"I thought about that thing so much," went on Gordon, "that I came down here lookin' for that there pile of stones. An' I found 'em an' this here is the place. I built this shack around that pile of stones just as square as them fellows that lays out the railroad lines could make it. I took down the pile of stones because they was in the way, but this is the place, Tom, an' you can take my word for it. The bed's in Utah, the chair's in Colorado, the keg's in Arizony an' the saddle over there's in New Mexico. When I want to leave Colorado for a spell I mosey over an' sit on the nail keg in Arizony an' I go to bed in Utah every night I'm at home. You can see for yourself, Tom," concluded Gordon with the utmost good-nature, "that the scheme ain't a bad one; as, for example, right at present."

"No, it ain't a bad one," assented the sheriff, "only there's this about it, Bill, you can't stay over there in Utah forever, you know. S'posin' I was to hang around here until you got hungry an' wanted to get up a snack o' sunthin' to eat for yourself, you'd have to come over into Colorado to eat it an' then I'd nab you. You can't live on the bed, you know. Did you think of that?"

"Sure," said Gordon, with a quiet smile. "You see this window? It's on the Utah side of the house. I can go out this window an' go around to the corral an' get my horse without ever leavin' Utah, an' I can ride from there up into Utah or down into Arizony or around the front of the house into New Mexico an' you can't lay a hand on me, Tom. I can keep in one o' them places, you know, until you get tired an' go home. Oh, I've got it all thought out."

The Colorado sheriff was silent for a few minutes, wrapped in deep thought on the perplexing problem with which he was face to face. The storm still raged with unabated fury, the rain beat upon the flimsy roof of the cabin and the wind roared around the door and windows. Bill Gordon smoked steadily and regarded the sheriff with satisfied amusement until both men were startled by a hail from without.

"Hello, the house!" called a stentorian voice above the storm. Bill Gordon looked uneasily at the sheriff.

"'Pears like there's somebody out there in the rain," said M'Kinney.

"I ain't lookin' for no visitors," answered Gordon. "This ain't no hotel."

The calls from without were repeated and finally succeeded by a sturdy rapping on the door of the shack. Gordon arose reluctantly, being careful not to cross the line passing through the centre of the little cabin, and unfastened the door. In a gust of wind and rain two bedraggled men stepped inside. Coming out of the pitchy darkness of the stormy night, they were dazzled for a moment by the lamplight and peered around the shack with winking eyes. Gordon took advantage of the circumstance to slip over into the corner and seat himself on the nail keg.

"Hello, Tom," cried one of the newcomers in surprise as he made out the features of the Colorado sheriff in the lamplight; "what you doin' here? We expected to find Bill Gordon. You waitin' for him too?"

"There's Bill, in the corner," replied Sheriff M'Kinney, and the two strangers turned in the direction indicated. Gordon was rocking himself lightly to and fro on the nail keg, still enjoying his smoke and with the same inscrutable smile on his features with which he had regaled the Colorado sheriff before acquainting him with his novel scheme for evading the law.

"Evenin', Jack," he said as the two turned toward him; "evenin', Buck. What brings you folks this way? Nothin' goin' wrong?"

"Well, I'll put up our horses while Jack tells you about it," said the man addressed as Buck, and he disappeared into the rain again. Jack looked rather awkwardly from one to the other of the men as though he did not exactly relish the situation in which he found himself.

"Before I say anything more," he began, addressing himself to Sheriff M'Kinney, "I want to know if Bill here is your prisoner. You got here first an,' of course, if he's under arrest, he's yours, an' we ain't got anything more to say."

"Well, no," said Sheriff M'Kinney; "to tell the truth, he ain't my prisoner."

"Good," said the drenched newcomer; "then we ain't had our trip for nothin'."

At that moment the man who had gone out to care for the horses returned and Jack greeted him gleefully.

"It's all right, Buck," he said. "Sheriff M'Kinney says he hasn't arrested Bill; so one of us is sure to get him. You can take him if you want, because I know I can get him when you're through with him. Bill," he continued, turning to Gordon, who was listening with the same bored smile on his face, "I've got a warrant for you for runnin' off Dad Walters' three colts and Buck here has got another warrant for you for a case down in his county. Now, we both been lookin' for you for a long time an' when we heard you was located in a shack down here, we decided to come after you together. Here you are an' here we are, an' I don't s'pose you're goin' to make any fuss about it, are you, Bill?"

"No, I ain't goin' to make any fuss about it," said Gordon, with a sly wink at M'Kinney; "only I ain't goin' with any of you."

"You ain't?" repeated Jack fiercely, laying his hand upon a ponderous revolver. "We'll see about that!"

"Wait a minute, Jack," said Gordon in a soothing tone; "take it easy. You're sheriff of San Juan County, Utah, ain't you?"

"Certainly I am," replied Jack impatiently.

"An' Buck there is sheriff of San Juan County, New Mexico, ain't he?" went on Gordon.

"Oh, we all know that," said Buck, starting forward. "Let's stop this foolishness."

"Wait a minute, wait a minute," warned Gordon, while M'Kinney industriously cleaned his pipe. "Now, neither one of you two sheriffs ever thought he had any right to serve warrants in Arizony, did you?"

"Arizona!" exclaimed Jack. "What are you talking about?"

"Only this," said Gordon, settling back, "That I'm in Arizony. Ask M'Kinney. He knows about it. Bed's in Utah, chair's in Colorado, keg's in Arizony and saddle's in New Mexico."

"What's all this about?" demanded the Utah sheriff, turning to the Colorado sheriff.

"I guess Bill's right," said Sheriff M'Kinney, "if he's tellin' the truth, an' I ain't got much reason to doubt that. We all know the State lines all cross down here somewheres an' Bill allows this is the spot. He found the pile of stones the fellows put up to mark it an' he built his shack around 'em. I guess he's got the best of it while he stays on the nail keg."

The two outwitted sheriffs glared at Gordon, at M'Kinney and at each other in turn, and in the silence the storm could be heard roaring with redoubled fury. At length the New Mexico sheriff started impatiently.

"This is all nonsense," he said, sternly. "Here we are, three sheriffs, each with a warrant for this fellow. Any one of us can arrest him by main force. Are we all going to be bluffed by this yarn about the State lines?"

"You wouldn't want to do an illegal act like that, Buck," ventured Gordon, winningly. "Not you, Buck, in front of two witnesses. You know if you dragged me out of Arizony, where I'm sittin' so comfortable, an' took me away off into New Mexico, I could summons these two repertable officers to testify about it, Buck, an' they'd have to tell the truth, you know, about how you served your warrant outside your own State. It wouldn't do, you know, Buck," concluded Gordon, with exasperating impudence. The three sheriffs looked at one another in silence once more.

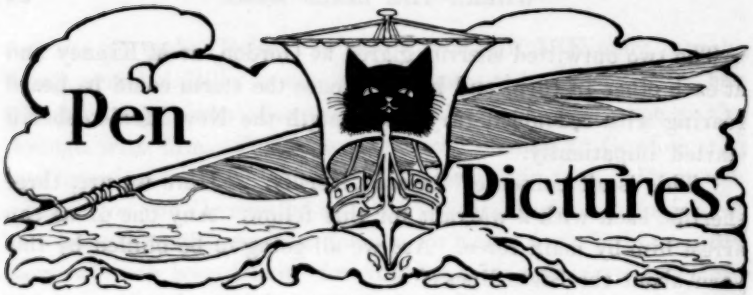
"No, I guess he's got us stalled," said Buck, at last, and Jack and M'Kinney solemnly shook their heads.

"I suppose we could stay here an' starve him out," suggested Jack. "He'd have to come out of Arizona some time."

"I want to get back when court opens to-morrow," said M'Kinney. "I've fooled away three weeks on this thing now."

"We might — " began Buck, when something happened. The howling blast struck the light shack with tremendous force, tore it from the earth and poised it on end for an instant, then hurled it to the north and east. The men fell in a heap with the table and the bed on top of them, but Sheriff M'Kinney had his eye on Gordon at the instant of the upheaval and had his hands on him as they all lay, half-stunned, in the wreckage.

"Bill," he breathed hoarsely into Gordon's ear, "we're in Colorado now. You're my prisoner!"



The Weirdest Land on Earth.*

No. I.

BY JAMES FRANCIS DWYER.

An island with nearly a hundred million sheep — an island with the richest gold and silver mines in the world — an island with coal enough to supply the nations of the globe — an island as large as the United States — an island where tens of millions of dollars have been paid in a vain war against noxious animals — such is Australia, the weirdest land on earth.

The world knows little of this great gray island which sits cold and lonely on the fringe of the Pacific. The hum of the old-world centres comes to Australia in faint whispers. She is far from the heart of things. She is a land apart, silent, strange, and solemn.

To write of Australia is to write of the Bush. The globe-trotter thinks differently. He writes of the five chief cities of the continent, and ignores the grim interior. But the five state capitals are but five bright eyes in a weary wilderness.

The Bush *is* Australia. The Bush that the globe-trotter never sees — the Bush that runs its gray length of over two thousand miles from the Great Dividing Range to the Leuwin Light — the Bush that stretches for three hundred leagues between Port Darwin and The Bight — the Bush that watches silently round the tin-roofed cottages that make pitiful specks in its drab distances. The Australian writer recognizes this, but the Australian

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writer is not read outside of his own country. The world derives its general information regarding the Southern hemisphere from the person with the note-book who arrives by one steamer and leaves by the next. That person visits Melbourne during the Flemington Cup Carnival; visits Sydney when the wool kings come out of the Silence at Eastertime; sees Brisbane during a regatta, and leaves the Bush — the weird, watching, waiting Bush — to an imagination that dreads investigating it at close range.

It is the Land of Big Distances. The world seems wide when one stands in a pasture field fifteen miles square — when one wanders over a sheep ranch of one hundred and sixty thousand acres. The world seems cold and lonely when one rides sixty miles on horseback to attend his nearest neighbor's funeral. Australia has less than five million inhabitants, but there are over three million square miles for them to wander in. The gray wastes separate her little inland towns. An undefinable mystery broods over the dead heart of the interior. A sense of loneliness appals and disheartens one. No streams gurgle through the arid wastes. No sounds break the stillness. The funereal silence makes one's ears ache. It is the land of opposites, where the birds, though of gorgeous plumage, are songless; where the trees shed their bark instead of their foliage; where that unique feathered freak, the laughing jackass, startles the traveler with his harsh, demoniacal cackle. One finds weird combination of bird and animal in the duck-billed platypus; the emu and kangaroo are in keeping with their unnatural surroundings, and even the swan, as if conforming with the order of topsyturvydom, wears black plumage instead of a snowy coat.

Australia strikes the observer who shuts out details and looks at the country with a wide eye, as a land that has missed its springtime. To those who travel the country there remains but a blur of gray upon the mind's canvas. Energy is killed by the tropical heat. For nine months of the year the continent swelters; the remaining three months cannot repair the damage. King Drought leaves a track of sun-bleached bones as he sweeps through the land; the Fire Fiend pounces on the dried-up vegetation with five-mile lengths of flashing flame.

But over this strange land hangs a halo. Men have stubbed

their toes against nuggets of gold as big as their heads. Fortunes have been made in a single day at Bendigo, Ballarat, Charters Towers, Coolgardie, and Kalgoorlie. The largest lumps of yellow gold that the world has ever seen have been dug out of the dried-up watercourses.

And she is the Land of the Golden Fleece. Fire and Drought do their worst, but the wool king fights bravely. The white eyed crow, dingo, rabbit and kangaroo come like plagues upon the sheep runs, but, in spite of all, the big island sends over two hundred and fifty million pounds of wool from its shores yearly! The vitality of the land is remarkable.

The task of populating Australia is the one that confronts her statesmen. In London the Agents-General of the different states offer special inducements to the British farmer, but the British farmer is coy. The state governments offer to take him the sixteen thousand miles round the Cape for forty dollars, but he does not leap at the offer. He is afraid. Although obtuse and unimaginative, he senses the loneliness of the great island, and he crams himself into the hold of an Atlantic liner bound for American ports in preference to the long trip to the Land of the Southern Cross. The big island calls him and he does not come. The gray plains remain unpopulated, the dead heart of the country remains unconquered, and Australia remains the Land of the Solemn Silence, while Drought and Fire wave their bloody banners over the interior.

NOTE. — The March issue of THE BLACK CAT will contain a second Pen Picture of the Weirdest Land on Earth. It will deal with the sheep-breeders' battle against living foes and present facts and figures so appalling as to defy belief.

"CATECHISMS"

Hand to Mouth Hints for those who thirst for the Milk of Human Kindness, and Heart to Heart Talks that will lead them from the Wrong Road into the Right Path.

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I am to give a luncheon at which a member of the Indian football team is to be the guest of honor. Can you suggest something unique in the way of appropriate entertainment? At a similar function recently given by a local lady to friends of the U. P. D. Road, miniature railroad tracks made of sticks of licorice, with toothpicks as cross ties, and running from the centre of the table to tiny red lanterns at each plate, proved a great hit. The idea was given her by the Epicure Editor of the Home Journal. As I am considered clever and ambitious I should dearly love to present something equally fetching.
ILENE HELENE.

Your question becomes a problem because, not since the discovery of the Nursing Bottle, has anything occurred that appealed so happily to the Hungry as the railroad idea you quote. It embodies the very epitome of epicurean elegance and deserves to be stuffed and mounted. At the same time it opens an avenue of possibilities as picturesque as perplexing. When, for example, you consider that your prospective guest might be a doctor or an undertaker you will congratulate yourself that you are merely to entertain a Kicker. It is therefore in honor of your coming chief that the following suggestion is offered. Take an ordinary water bucket. Fill it with pink lemonade and place in the centre of the dining table, which should be chalk-marked to represent a football field. Conceal the bucket under a tepee made of bark, leaving an opening for ladling out the liquid. In large letters of bright red tinsel label the tepee FIRE WATER. Now with deft fingers fashion from bits of hand-painted chamois skin and tufts of hair, contributed by members of your family and servants, tiny scalps representing souvenirs from college girls and football heroes and strew these carelessly over the table. By the aid of a darning ball make, from boots discarded by father and brother, small footballs, one for each guest. Decorate these with war bonnets made from bright rooster feathers, and fill with bonbons. In small birch-bark canoes serve arrow-shaped doughnuts with Indian pudding and tomahawk-shaped red beet pickles.

I am told that I have lovely hair, particularly when it is done in a Marcelle Wave. But the young man who is paying me attentions, while he is a perfect gentleman, is a dreadfully poor sailor. He is so sensitive in that respect that when he sees my Marcelle Wave he invariably becomes seasick. Please tell me how I can keep my Wave and not lose Willie? MARIE.

On evenings when the young man calls, calm the wave by pouring oil — hair oil — on it. This should obviate Willie's seasickness or at least make the attacks less violent.